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Book 60

ESSAYS

UPON *Moore 94:1:*

POPULAR EDUCATION,

CONTAINING A

PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

OF THE

SCHOOLS OF MASSACHUSETTS,

AND

AN OUTLINE

OF AN

INSTITUTION FOR THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

BEFORE the publication of "Letters on the Free Schools of New England," in the autumn of 1824, it formed a part of the original design of the author to pursue the subject in a series of papers of a more popular character. Accordingly, during the winter of 1824-5, the following Essays were published in numbers in the "Boston Patriot" with the signature of "Franklin." Apart from the great faults in the government and instruction of the common schools, arising chiefly from the ignorance and inexperience of the teachers employed in them, many intelligent and patriotic citizens had come to regard with deep regret the course of legislation, in this state, upon the subject of popular education generally. The free schools, strange as it may seem, had received almost no legislative attention, protection, or bounty, for nearly forty years. Of course, instead of taking the lead in improvement, as they should have done, they remained as nearly stationary, as any institution can remain, in such an age and such a state of society, as those in which we live. Some men of longer foresight, and many, whose interest in the subject, was quickened by their having families to educate, saw and lamented this state of things; but as it was less trouble, on the whole, to build up schools of their own, than to reform those already in existence, they sent in their petitions to the Legislature in great profusion for acts of incorporation, and for pecuniary assistance to enable them to establish Academies under their own direction. These petitions were usually granted; and donations, small ones to be sure, were made to further their objects. But the obvious tendency of this course of legislation was to help directly those citizens who least needed help, and to encourage precisely that class of schools, which, if they were necessary, would spring up spontaneously without the aid of legislative bounty.

Within a few years, even these higher schools, from their unwieldy organization, have ceased to afford such instruction as the public require: and private establishments begin now to take the lead of them. Thus have we departed more and more widely from the principle assumed by our fathers in the establishment of the Free Schools, viz. to provide as good instruction in all elementary and common

branches of knowledge for the poorest citizen in the commonwealth, as the richest could buy with all his wealth. Advancement upon advancement has been made by a few, while the mass, who are less vigilant remain as they were, with only the unconsoling advantage of a little reflected light sent back by those, who have gone before them.

It was the main object of these essays to expose the pernicious tendency of the above policy in the provisions for popular education, in a political point of view; and in pursuance of that object, the author strove to fix the public attention upon those parts of the system, which seemed, most imperiously, to demand reform. Among the most glaring defects, which long experience and pretty wide observation had pointed out in the schools, was, the incompetency of the teachers. And among the most obvious means of remedying this capital defect, was, the establishment of an institution for the education and direct preparation of those teachers for their difficult and important employment. An outline was, therefore, thrown out towards the close of these essays, of an institution for such a purpose. Though no legislative steps have yet been taken to carry this or any similar plan into effect, the necessity of something of the kind is so obvious, and the design has found so great favour with the public, that an institution is about to be established for the purpose on private responsibility, with such aid and encouragement from the legislature, as they may be pleased to bestow. Maturer reflection, and the changing the institution from a public to a private seminary, will of course suggest and require some modifications in the plan but the essential features must remain the same as here stated.

In regard to these essays, it seems but justice to observe, that, although the facts and general course of reasoning contained in them were the result of previous research and reflection, they were written out from loose materials, most of them, from day to day as they were printed, without the thought at that time of their ever appearing in another form. They can, therefore, have no pretension to literary merit. But the subject of them has since become so much a topic of public interest and discussion, that it has frequently, and from different quarters, been suggested to the author, that if collected and put in a form more convenient and accessible, they might still further promote the cause, which they were originally designed to subserve. With the flattering hope that this may be in some degree the case, they have been subjected to a very hasty revision, and are now offered to the public in a pamphlet form. The author will not regret his labour, if they win but a few more friends to the cause of popular education.

Boston, 28th October, 1836

ESSAY I.

EXTENT OF THE SUBJECT.

THE education of youth has excited, within these few years, particularly in our own country, an unusual degree of interest ; yet, not so much as its importance demands. It has engaged the attention of some discriminating minds, and enlisted the feelings of some ardent hearts ; yet, these, too, are much fewer than the public good requires. In approaching a subject so comprehensive in its details as that of education, it cannot be expected, that I should be zealous and rash enough to attempt, here, a very minute discussion of it. Especially, when the zeal and ardour, which the importance of the subject naturally inspires, are constantly allayed by the doubts, which hang around and apprise me, that all my efforts may result in no good either to myself or the public. It is a hope of some successful influence, far enough from assurance, which encourages me to discuss, briefly, a few only of the topics connected with, and involved in it. This it will be my endeavour to do plainly. I shall confine my remarks, more particularly, to political views of the subject, and enforce the consideration of them, more strongly, from political motives. I shall state some facts connected with our system of Free Schools, which I think are not so generally known, or whose importance is not so deeply felt as they ought to be. And if I should find it necessary to point out a few faults and defects in their organization, and also in the appropriations of money for their support, it will not be with the intention of impeaching the motives, or undervaluing the efforts of those, who have laboured, however unsuccessfully, to perfect the system, and bring from it the greatest public good. But, if upon careful examination, defects

shall be found to exist, and abuses be detected; it is certainly desirable, that the former should be, forthwith, supplied, and the latter corrected. I have not, however, even in my own mind, reduced to such system, my ideas on the subject of discussion, as to justify a more explicit statement of what I propose to do. I must, therefore, leave my subsequent essays to explain their own meaning and objects; feeling perfectly assured that, if they cannot do that, they will be of but little use.

The influence of education on our character and happiness is not duly estimated, even by those, who seem to pay most attention to it. The meaning of the term, even, in its general acceptation, is much too narrow. It is thought to comprehend a little instruction in the art of talking, and reading over words, without any definite ideas attached to them—a few moral lessons in the form of maxims, which are not understood, or are constantly contradicted by every example—and all enforced by the salutary discipline of the rod, agreeably to the injunction of the “Wisest Man;” who, with reverence be it spoken, made many wiser maxims, than “spare the rod and spoil the child.” Education means more than this. It embraces all that series of means, by which the human understanding is gradually enlightened, and the dispositions of the heart are formed and called forth, between earliest infancy and the period, when we consider ourselves as qualified to take a part in active life. Though a consistent system fully developed, with constant reference to the above definition, and thoroughly carried into practice, would be a great improvement on all systems of education, which have hitherto prevailed; yet that definition would be much better if it were more general still. It should embrace the development of the powers of our bodies. This is as much a branch of education, as the intellectual and moral development of our heads and hearts. In fact, all that a man is when grown to maturity, more than he is at his birth, is the result of education in its widest sense.

All its branches, in this general acceptation of the term, are not equally within the reach of means, or subject to our control, even when those means are applied with the utmost human skill. The powers of the body, for instance, will be, in some good degree, developed by the natural course of things, without any direct efforts of our own.

with reference to them. This circumstance is, perhaps, one reason why this branch of education has been hitherto neglected entirely, or never considered a part of it. Our animal wants oblige us to make some use of our limbs, whether we are willing or unwilling, in order to supply those wants. And this necessary exercise of the powers of our bodies, develops them, and constitutes all the education, we have in one branch of the great subject. But though the natural course of things, does more for our education in this respect, than in any other, it is still apprehended, that human means may be applied to this part of education with a most happy effect. In the application of our means, however, nature must not be contradicted in her operations; but followed and aided. With a thorough knowledge of the physiology of our bodies, occasions and opportunities may be arranged and presented for calling into exercise all the various functions of the different parts, without contradicting or forcing nature. But such a course of discipline must be of incalculable utility in strengthening the power and quickening the energy of those parts of the body, which are seldom, in the ordinary avocations of life, called into action. The remark applies with peculiar pertinency to those, who are destined from their cradle to the life and sedentary habits of a student. Placed by circumstances, they can hardly be called favorable circumstances, above the necessity of bodily exertions, they usually grow up a puny race, liable to be completely decomposed by every flake of snow and flaw of wind, which assails them. The evils of such a defective education are not learned till it is too late to apply a remedy. The habits of the body are formed, and cannot be changed without violence to what has now become nature. And the hold on life, of some of our most valuable men, is rendered so feeble that it is to them, hardly worth possessing. One would think it was a law of nature, that the powers of the body must decline, precisely as those of the mind advance, till the unfortunate student finds himself all spiritualized before his time. So much has this come to be the fashion in our times, that it would be considered evidence of great intellectual attainments to be occasionally sick of dyspepsia, and to require now and then a journey or a tour in Europe for the recovery of the health. And it would be no less an evidence of stupidity and downright vul-

garity to be able to look a north-west wind in the face, to toss a "fifty-six" in the air, and leap a five-barred gate. It is submitted to an intelligent and reflecting community, whether there be any thing inconsistent in the development of the powers of the body, in connexion with the mental and moral discipline, which have hitherto made up the whole definition of education ; and whether some improvement may not be made in our systems of education, which shall make us physically stronger as well as intellectually wiser.

But who shall reform the theory and the practice of our discipline for the young, so as to make its influence the greatest and the best upon individuals and upon the public ? All. Every member of the community. For every one has a common and almost an equal interest in the result. The older are the natural guardians of the younger. Upon the former, therefore, devolves the responsibility of the education of the latter. It is by their care, that we are enabled to survive the helplessness of infancy. It is by their larger experience, that we are taught to moderate, or supply for ourselves, the wants of childhood. It is by their affectionate counsels, by their uniform and consistent examples of kindness and justice, of piety and devotion, we are won to the cause of truth and virtue. In a word, it is by the influence of all these, their care, their experience, their counsel, and their example, that the young are allured from one degree of moral and intellectual excellence to another, till they approach the highest dignity of human nature. Or it is by their neglect and indifference that the young are suffered ; and by their pernicious example, they are taught, to grow up in ignorance and vice, distinguished from the brutes, only, by the atrocity and malignity of their crimes.

I have said that the older are the natural guardians of the younger. This relation subsists generally, and is independent of the forms and organization of civil society. And by virtue of it, we are bound to lend the influence of our example ; and, as far as is consistent with other duties, to afford the light of our experience to warn them of approaching danger, to apprise them of happiness within their reach ; and, by all the means in our power, to prepare them to discharge, faithfully and successfully, similar duties to those, who may come after them. and be in like manner

dependent upon them. This obligation, though a general one, is nevertheless a strong one. The duty it imposes is the dictate of natural and unsophisticated feeling; and it results directly from its obvious tendency to produce the greatest degree of individual and public happiness. But, assuming it to be granted, for it must be granted, that all, who have arrived at greater maturity, and made larger attainments, in what it concerns men most to know, are morally obliged to do something for the benefit of the less experienced, how will this obligation affect our own actions and practice? As the obligation rests upon all, and exists prior to, and independently of, any of the nearer relations, in which we may be placed to the young; it must necessarily be so general and indeterminate, as sometimes to admit a doubt of its applicability to our particular case. And under doubtful circumstances, and such will always exist, or be easily created, we shall be quite likely to explain the obligation, so as in a pretty good degree, to suit our own selfish and short-sighted convenience. Fortunately for our happiness, as well as for that of those who must be guided by our experience, we are not left with so vague a rule for the discharge of our obligations in this respect. The duty is of the highest importance, involving in itself both temporal and eternal consequences; the obligation is strong, and the rule explicit. If we falter in the discharge of that duty, either through perversity or indifference, the responsibility, is surely and entirely our own.

Laws, where laws exist upon the subject, custom, and the forms of civil society, have subdivided the labour of instructing the young; and narrowed the sphere of individual responsibility almost to a point under our immediate inspection. None can, here, plead in mitigation of their neglect of or indifference to the subject, ignorance of where their duty lies, or who are the peculiar objects of it. Though, perhaps, many acknowledging the duty, seeing the objects of it, and being resolved to do every thing in their power to discharge it, may be ignorant of what it consists in. But when we have circumscribed the sphere of our responsibilities to the young, and brought them under our own eyes; when we clearly comprehend what we wish, or what we may expect to accomplish by our efforts; it will then be seasonable to investigate or invent the means to be used for giving to our exertions their greatest efficacy.

ESSAY II.

INFLUENCE OF EARLY EDUCATION.

THE earliest years of infancy are committed to maternal tenderness by indications which can hardly be mistaken. No mother who knows that her children require the particular care and protection of any one, can doubt that the first stages of that care devolve, principally, upon her; though many who acknowledge the duty, and are devoted to the discharge of it, may not know the best means of accomplishing their object. Timid in adopting any systematic course of early education lest it should be wrong, and anxious to do something lest their children should suffer from their neglect, they commonly adopt and revoke, trace and retrace, do and undo; till, amidst all these contradictions and conflicting principles, the whole period of life, which is committed almost exclusively to their care, is wasted in doing nothing effectually. Yet, however inefficient this fluctuating and often entirely wrong course of discipline may be, the infancy and childhood of comparatively few of any generation are blessed with even maternal solicitude as to their education. By far the greater part of the children of every age and of almost every nation grow up without any instruction from their parents, except a little aid in the development of such instincts as serve to preserve their existence. Their whole education, if it may be called by that name, is drawn from parental examples, which are not always the best, and are oftentimes the most corrupt; and derived from the influence of surrounding society, which, all will acknowledge, contains abundantly enough of depravity to corrupt the propensities and pervert the tender principles of a child. The character of each generation, whatever it may be, is thus

entailed with but slight modifications, upon its successor. And human reason and discretion have but little to do about it. All the appetites and passions, which we possess in common with the other animals, come into exercise without our efforts, and often in spite of them. While reason and the class of powers, which form man's distinguishing attributes, are developed but slowly and with the greatest care. The former, moreover, arrive at full maturity and strength, long before we can raise up the counteracting power of the latter to direct and control them. What wonder, then, that mankind make slow progress in improvement, when the current of strong influences sets so steadily against them!

But the state of society, in which we happen to live, is, perhaps, as favourably constituted as any on earth, for deriving the full advantage from a judicious well directed system of domestic education. For almost all have intelligence enough to understand its influence on the future character of children, and wisdom enough to appreciate its importance to them. Few, too, are here so depressed with poverty and want as not to have some opportunities to be improved for this purpose. And comparatively few have yet run so wild in dissipation and pleasure—that other barbarism—as not to leave some interstices of time for reflection upon a subject; which, one would suppose, must be more important to them than any other. Systems of domestic education, however, can only be improved by an enlightened public opinion, and well informed heads of families devoted to the subject. To them, particularly to the mother, pertain the duty and the privilege of conducting the first stages of the education of their family. And both the Church and the State, in modern times, must be content to leave their future pillars in these hands.

Neither lawgivers, nor the forms of civil society have often interrupted what seems to be so plain a law of nature. Instances are to be found, indeed, far back in the history of the world, of a violation of it. But they are found in ages, and amidst institutions, in other respects, very different from our own. The Persian women, for example, were so far awed by power or influenced by the institutions and customs of their country, as to yield their children at a very early age, to the care of the public schools provided for their education. It was not merely to give

them up, for a few hours in a day, to the care of instructors appointed by themselves and subject to their direction and control. But they were no longer the children of their mothers. The state or the public adopted them, and assumed the whole business of their future instruction. The institutions of the Persians, for early education were exceedingly simple in their organization, and perfectly adapted, as all institutions for similar purposes should be, to the object, for which they are intended. They seem to have been formed, too, under a strong conviction of the influence of early discipline. And they were so conducted as to prepare the children and youth for a faithful and successful discharge of the duties, which would devolve upon them in the capacity of men. In one respect, certainly, if no more, hints may be derived from them, useful even to more modern and enlightened ages. I allude to the attention which they paid to the developement of the physical as well as of the intellectual and moral powers. As a great part of the lives of the men were employed in war, in repelling the aggressions of their neighbours, and in making aggressions upon them ; so a great part of their childhood and youth was taken up in athletic exercises or the appropriate discipline of their bodies. Of course, where the influence of early education is in any degree, understood, the discipline of the young will have a reference, to what they are to practice when older. And in those states of society, where muscular force and agility constitute the principal accomplishments of age, they will be inculcated with the greatest assiduity upon youth.

But of all the ancient lawgivers, Lyeurgus seems most thoroughly to have understood the influence of early education. And he most successfully turned its influence to account in accomplishing his designs. "What he thought most conducive to the virtue and happiness of a city," says his biographer, "was, principles interwoven with the manners and breeding of the people. These would remain immoveable, as founded in inclination, and be the strongest and most lasting tie ; and the habits, which education produced in youth, would answer in each the purpose of a lawgiver. As for smaller matters, contracts about property, and whatever occasionally varied, it was better not to reduce these to a written form and unalterable method, but to suffer them to change with the times, and to admit of additions

or retrenchments at the pleasure of persons so well educated. For *he resolved the whole business of legislation into the bringing up of youth.*" The Spartan children, therefore, were not under tutors, purchased or hired with money, nor were the parents at liberty to educate them as they pleased ; but as soon as they were seven years old, Lycurgus ordered them to be enrolled in companies, where they were all kept under the same order and discipline, and had their exercises and recreations in common. He, who showed the most conduct and courage amongst them, was made captain of the company, the rest kept their eyes on him, obeyed his orders, and bore, with patience, the punishments he inflicted ; so that their whole education was an exercise of obedience. The old men were present at their diversions, and often suggested some occasions of dispute or quarrel, that they might observe with exactness, the spirit of each, and their fineness in battle.

From this brief account of the institutions of Lycurgus for the education of youth it will be seen, that it " was not so much his object to give a knowledge of a great variety of things, as to form the passions, sentiments, and ideas, to that tone which might best assimilate with the constitutions of the state ; and so to exercise the abilities of both body and mind, as to lead them to the highest possible capacity for the performance of every thing useful ; particularly of every thing useful to the commonwealth."* By the wisdom and energy of such a policy, he in a few years, completely transformed the manners, customs, and characters of the Spartans. From an indolent, luxurious and debauched people, he rendered them active, temperate and virtuous, according to his ideas of those terms. So firmly, too, had he established his institutions, and so intimately had he blended their principles with the very characters and nature of his people, by his system of education ; that, by their own strength, they sustained themselves in healthy and vigorous action, for nearly five hundred years, after his death. But " the beautiful pile of justice reared by the pious Numa," says Plutarch, " presently fell to the ground, being without the cement of education. For Numa left it to the option or convenience of parents, to bring up their sons to agriculture, to ship-building, to the business

* Mitford.

of a brazier, or the art of musician ; as if it were not necessary for one design to run through the education of them all, and for each individual to have the same bias given him ; but as if they were all like passengers in a ship, who coming, each from a different employment and with a different intent, stand upon their common defence in time of danger, merely out of fear for themselves, or their property, and on other occasions are attentive only to their private ends."

Fisher Ames, indeed, in his essays upon the institutions, of Lycurgus supposes that the number, who received their education in the public schools, above described, constituted but a very small part of the whole Spartan youth, and that the rest went at large, like the youth of the other Grecian States with almost no instruction at all. But whether this theory be true or false is not important to my present purpose to determine.

No one, I think, who has examined those institutions, in connexion with the history of Sparta and the other cotemporary Grecian states, can doubt, that, it was by controlling more perfectly the education of the youth, some or all of them, he gave to her the distinctive national character, which she preserved for so long a time after him. Whether the Spartan or the Athenian character was the most perfect according to our notions of the perfection of national character, is quite another question. The Spartan Lawgiver made his nation what he wished it to be. He desired age to be respected at Sparta. He taught the youth this virtue ; and age was respected there. He wished to banish luxury. He taught the youth to despise it ; and luxury was unknown in Sparta. He wished to correct effeminacy. He taught the youth to value themselves for something else, to emulate each other in acts of hardship ; and who could endure suffering like the Lacedemonians ?

This overwhelming influence upon the character of a people, was not acquired and exercised, by giving to the young, now and then, a moral lecture upon the respect due to age, upon "the uselessness of luxury," or "the advantages of a healthy constitution ;" while all these good maxims were constantly contradicted, and their influence counteracted by every thing seen, and heard, and felt in the examples of those about them. The young were taught by all they saw to practice the virtues of the age, with-

out being able to talk of their moral excellence, and perhaps without even knowing them by a name. Man was then imitative ; and he is now imitative. He will, therefore, copy what he sees in the examples of others much sooner, than he will practice what he hears in their precepts. The abstract standard of excellence, too, with the ancients, was not so far removed from the concrete standard exhibited in the conduct of men, as it is in modern times ; and, of course, the moral lessons founded upon, and drawn from that standard, were not so liable to be totally wasted, as similar ones are at the present day. Every thing around, which could be seized upon by the youthful mind as an example, was then in more perfect keeping, with what was taught them by precept. This circumstance will account, in some degree, for the greater influence, which the attention bestowed upon the education of the young seemed then to have, than the same attention seems now to have. The Spartan Lawgiver influenced his people by means of early education, more than his cotemporaries, only, because he controlled more perfectly all the associations of childhood and youth. He, and he alone, seemed thoroughly to understand, and skilfully to turn to his use, that principle of our nature, which has since been so happily described by Dugald Stewart. "Whoever" says he, "has the regulation of the associations of another, from earliest infancy, is, to a great degree, the arbiter of his happiness."

But the associations of the young, in a country, like our own, cannot be so readily controlled as they could be with the ancients. What could with them be affected by the decree of a Lawgiver, must now be done by the slower, though not less powerful influence of public opinion. Where each individual constitutes a part of the sovereignty of the State, each one must of course be addressed, directly or indirectly, and convinced of the utility of public measures for improvement. When all this has been done, steps are taken affecting the interests of society, with as great firmness, and with as rational a hope of success, as if the process of making up the sovereign will were more summary.

I have referred to these instances of attention paid to early education among the ancients, not because I suppose that their institutions are at all suited to our times, or fit

to be adopted in our state of society ; but in order to show by history and example—the safest teachers of human wisdom—the influence of early education, in a political point of view. Human nature, it is presumed, is not essentially changed since the empire of the Persians or the days of Lycurgus. And if the Spartan could mould and transform a nation to suit his own taste, by means of early education, why may not the same be done at the present day ? The children of modern times are as helpless and as ignorant at birth as were the children of Sparta. If they have different characters when men, education has made them so. And it may make another generation as different from the present, as the present one is from the cruel though heroic Spartans. The silence of history upon the subject, leaves us to infer that they had five senses ; and we, of a more enlightened age, have no more. The wide diversity in our characters, therefore, has been produced, by what those senses have let into our minds and hearts, and the various modifications of it, which different circumstances have made.

The education which we receive from the society in which we live, is partly beyond, and partly within our own control. The influence of it is much more important to us, than we commonly suppose. Indeed it makes up far the greater part of our characters in manhood. We begin to feel its power at birth, and continue to feel it till death. How, think you, would a christian teacher succeed in making a good christian character of a pupil, if that pupil were surrounded from its cradle by Mussulmen only, and saw and heard nothing, but what came from them, save the solitary lectures of his instructor ? This view of the subject will enable us, in some degree, to estimate the extent of the influence of the education of example. Precepts never can, essentially, counteract the influence of examples ; but the latter may and often do, as our daily observations teach us, counteract the influence of the former. It is not the instructions of the mother, though she next has the greatest influence, it is not the maxims of the schoolmaster, though he were as wise as Socrates, it is not the sermons and the exhortations of the pious minister, though he were a perfect saint, which form the character of the man in any country or in any age. The examples of the society, in which he grows up, these form his character, and make him what he is when matured in manhood.

If then it is by the power of the examples which we see, more than by the influence of any and of all other means together, that our characters are what they are in manhood ; if it depends upon these, whether we become Pagan, Mahometan, or Christian ; if it depends upon these, whether we grow up men of principle, or men without principle ; men discharging all our duties to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, or men neglecting and despising them all ; it would seem to be a matter of some consequence that the subject have a little consideration in this aspect of it. It ought to arrest the attention of every man, who is interested in the happiness of his fellow men, of every one who is interested in the character, condition, and prospects of his country, and above all, of every parent, who is interested in the formation of that character of his children, which is to abide by them here, and upon which depends their destiny hereafter.

Although we cannot control the examples which may be set before us, we may in a great degree, control those, which we set before others, who will never fail to follow them. And, if my readers will indulge me in a little more preaching, there is no responsibility, which rests upon us, as parents loving our children, as patriots loving our country, as philanthropists loving mankind, or as rational and immortal beings adoring our Creator, more solemn to us or important to society, than that of yielding our influence, whatever it may be, for the improvement and the advancement of the rising generation. Let the path of virtue be cleared of the asperities with which the ignorance and the wiles of men have obstructed it, and let it be illumined by the bright and steady example of *all*, whom children from their infancy most love and respect ; and there need be no fear but it will be followed by many, who are now allured or driven from it. Though parents may look with occasional concern upon the gambols of their little ones by the side of the way, they may be assured that they will always be within call. And when the exuberance of their life and spirits have subsided and less embarrassed reason succeeds, they will be ready to take up the undeviating course of their fathers and turn as anxious an eye upon those who may come after them.

But he who has corrupted one youth whose examples will again corrupt other youths and so forward, the moral

taint spreading wider and wider at each remove from its original source, while society continues its organization, has inflicted an evil on an individual, which he can never repair; he has injured society in a manner, which he can never hope to remedy, though he should set over against it a whole life of good instructions; he has fixed a deep stain upon the character of the community, which he can never wipe out; and he has destroyed, as far as his influence could destroy, capacities for happiness, which emanate only from the goodness of God.

If such then be the influence of the state of society, in which we grow up, on our characters; and if such will be that of the society, which we constitute and must transmit to posterity, on their characters; it is important, that those, who contribute more than others to give a form to that society, whose larger acquirements and stronger powers, whether of good or evil, go far to stamp with glory or with infamy the character of their age, should consider well, whether they do not counteract, by the instruction of their example, what they take so much pains to inculcate, by their precepts. And if they do, though they should cheat posterity into a belief that they have been their greatest benefactors, they may rest assured that they have entailed upon them their greatest curses.

ESSAY III.

EXAMINATION OF THE SCHOOLS OF MASSACHUSETTS.

ENOUGH has been said, to show the wide field, which the subject of education opens ; that it embraces the development of the physical, as well as of the moral and intellectual powers of man ; that many of its departments have been, hitherto, wholly neglected, or committed to chance ; and that many more are attempted under such disadvantages, as to place a tolerably successful result beyond our reasonable expectations. That is, we exercise opposite influences over the young ; counteracting by one, the very purpose which we expect to attain by another. And though I have done but little more than to glance at the unbounded prospect which spreads itself before me, and allures me by its freshness and its interest in every direction ; it is, perhaps, more than time to turn away from these general views of the subject, and attend to nearer objects. There is enough under our own eyes, and within our own doors, to engross all the time and attention which we have to bestow. What have the people of Massachusetts done, what are they doing, and what will they do, in the business of education ? These seem to me to be questions of the deepest interest to this whole community.

We can recur with no small degree of pleasure to our history, and see what has been done. The pilgrims of Plymouth set the first example not only to our own country, but to the civilized world, of a system of Free Schools, at which were educated together, not by compulsion but from mutual choice, all classes of the community,—the high, the low, the rich, and the poor. A system, by which the state so far assumed the education of the youth, as to make all property responsible for the support of common

schools for the instruction of all children. This institution was indeed the foster child, and has justly been the pride of Massachusetts and of New England. Its influences were strong and they still are strong upon the moral and political character of the people.

If our ancestors were stern republicans, this institution did more than any and all others, to make them so, and to keep them so. While the best schools in the land are *free* all the classes of society are blended. The rich and the poor meet and are educated together. And if educated together, nature is so even handed in the distribution of her favors that no fear need be entertained, that a monopoly of talent, of industry and consequently of acquirements will follow a monopoly of property. The principle, upon which our free schools are established, is in itself, a stern leveler of factitious distinctions. Every generation, while the system is executed according to the true spirit of it, as conceived by our ancestors, will bring its quota of *new men* to fill the public places of distinction,—men who owe nothing to the fortunes or the crimes of their fathers, but all, under the blessing of God, to their own industry and the common schools. I say the *principle* in itself, because it has never been carried into full operation, and probably never will be.

Its tendency, however, is not to level by debasing the exalted ; but by exalting the debased. And it is a more effectual check against an aristocracy of wealth, and consequently of political influence, than would be a national jubilee and the equal distribution of property once in fifty-years, without such a principle at the foundation of our system of public instruction. “ Knowledge is power,” says Lord Bacon ; and so is property power, because it will procure knowledge. If we suppose society divided into two classes, the rich and the poor, the property of the former class, if there were no such institution as the free schools, would procure such immense advantages of education, as to bring second, third, and any rate talents, into successful competition with those of the first order, without such advantages.

This use of property puts upon it its highest value. And it would not be politic, if it were possible to destroy it. But, it should seem that this use ought to be limited ; and that some of our institutions, at least, ought to have the

tendency to put all upon the footing, on which nature and the God of nature left them. And just in proportion as you lose sight of, or abandon the true principle of the free schools; you lose sight of, and abandon all the moral, political, and religious blessings which result from them. You check the diffusion of knowledge through all classes of people. You stop the circulation through the extremities of the body politic of the very life-blood, which must nourish and sustain them. You may preserve and amuse yourselves with the name of free institutions, and of a republican government, but you will not be blessed with the reality. You may incorporate in your constitution, if you like, the articles, "that all men are born free and equal," and "that all are eligible to the highest offices;" but this is not freedom, while ninety-nine hundredths of the community have not the means of fitting themselves or their children, for discharging the duties of those high offices. As well might you tie the legs, and pinion the arms of a man, and tell him he has as fair a chance to win the race, as one who is free and trained to the course. Something like this our ancestors must have felt, who established the free schools; and something like this, their posterity must feel, if they would cherish and preserve them.

The first organization of the schools under the Colony Charter did not, probably, yield so good instruction, as was afforded afterwards, or as is afforded now in them. But it gave to *all* the best elementary education, which could be procured in the country. The next organization under the Province Charter gave better instruction to be sure; but its excellence was more the result of the progress of society in other respects, than of any improvements in the discipline of the schools themselves. Though somewhat advanced, they did not so much take the lead of society, as they had done before; and individuals began to look about them and to supply for themselves and their families better instruction than they afforded. Under our present constitution, or for the last forty years, the schools have no doubt been vastly improved. But they have, most certainly, not kept up with the progress of society, in other respects. Although their absolute motion must be acknowledged to have been onward, their relative motion has, for many years, been retrograde. And there never was a time, since the settlement of the country, when the com-

mon schools were farther in the rear of the improvements of the age in almost every thing else affecting our condition and happiness, than they are at the present moment.

We impose upon ourselves in examining our literary institutions, and in estimating the efficiency of our means of popular education somewhat in this manner. We see six schools supported now, where there were once but three ; and, therefore, conclude that just twice as much attention is paid to education as there formerly was. But there are probably four times as many scholars and inhabitants, upon the same territory as then supported the three schools, and more than four times the amount of wealth. So that instead of six, they ought at the same rate, to support more than twelve schools. We see, indeed, many new branches of learning introduced into all our lower seminaries, and hastily conclude, that all this is advancement in their character and condition. True, it may be so ; but how many new arts and sciences have sprung up within these few years ; and assumed the dignity of separate and important departments of education ? And what sort of a figure in the world would your pupil make if destitute of instruction in them ? Does a common school education prepare those, who have that only, better for discharging all the duties, which society requires of its best and highest citizens, than it did forty years ago ? This is the correct method of estimating the condition of the schools. We must compare them with the altered state of society in other respects.

Our instructors of the present day, would, no doubt, appear to good advantage when contrasted with those of the last century. But compare them with the first men in the community. What is their standing there ? By these means, and by these only, can we decide correctly, whether they are likely to take the lead in the improvements of the age ; or whether they will, more probably fall lazily into the wake of those improvements, which have gone far before them. Examine the amount of your appropriations for the support of free schools, in connexion with the number of youth, who must be educated in them, and also in connexion with the present wealth of the country ; examine *what* is taught in connexion with what is required, in order to discharge successfully, all the duties of a citizen of the republic ; examine *how* it is taught in connexion

with the present improved state of science and the arts ; and above all, examine the acquirements, the experience, and the skill of your teachers, in connexion with the important duty which you assign to them ; and there can be no doubt, that you will come to the conclusion, that the condition of the free schools is far behind, what the improved and improving state of society among us requires. And while you pass loud praises to the memory of your ancestors, for the establishment of an institution, which has contributed so much to your own happiness, prosperity, and glory, you stand convicted of perverting it in your hands, and defrauding posterity of an inheritance, which was designed for them.

Having thus stated the principles upon which an examination into our means of popular education should be conducted, then briefly alluded to the principal points to which inquiries should be first directed, and lastly intimated the result, at which I have arrived, and at which I think all must arrive, in regard to the present condition of the free schools, I now hasten forward to take a similar view of other parts of the system. The decline of popular education among us, or rather the comparatively retrograde motion of the principal means of it, has been more perceptible, during the last twenty or thirty years, than it ever was at any former period. And in the mean time, there has sprung up another class of schools, more respectable, indeed, in their character, and better answering the demands of a portion of the public, but not free. The academies are *public*, but not *free* schools. They are open to the whole community, under certain conditions. But those conditions exclude nineteen twentieths of the people, from participating in the advantages, which they are designed to afford. Leaving behind, then, nineteen twentieths of the whole population of the state, the academies have generally been so well conducted, as to meet the wants and expectations of the other twentieth. This last small fraction embraces that part of the community, who set the highest value upon the influence of early education, and are able to defray the expenses necessary to provide for it. But in the rapid progress of knowledge, and the consequent demand for instruction of all kinds, even this class of schools has ceased to be adequate to supply the wants of all. And private establishments begin to take the lead of them.

Now I rejoice at the establishment of every institution for the education of youth, whether it be for the benefit of one or a thousand, if it can be conducted upon better principles of government and instruction than those which generally prevail. It is matter of congratulation that there are some among us, who feel the need of better schools; and I am one of the most hearty admirers of the private enterprize, which would endeavour to supply so important a public demand. I appreciate fully, too, the efforts of those who have founded and conducted our public Academies. But, it is most deeply to be regretted, that their plans are quite so much tinctured with the notions of the last century, and, that the systems of instruction and government, which they adopt, do not partake more largely of the modern and improved ideas of education. The energy of their boards of directors, too, is frequently much impaired by the struggles among individuals to adjust opposite views and conflicting interests. And the fear of innovation hangs like an *incubus* upon many, and paralyzes the efforts of all, even of those who have thrown it off.

Better schools and better instruction are demanded, than the academies in their present state afford. And they must soon be supplied. It is certainly to be regretted, that these public demands exist to so great an extent, and that they are every day increasing. It may here, without impertinence, be suggested to those who control the public academies, that if those establishments were put in the condition in which it should seem they might easily be put, they would meet the wants of even the most discriminating, and anticipate the opening of private schools of a higher character. If those wants exist, it is certainly better that they should be supplied by private schools, than not at all. But it would be much more for the interest of the community, if they could be supplied or anticipated by public ones. Not because it is any evil, that a few scholars are withheld from the public schools, and better provided for in private ones. But every private establishment, which is so far superior to the public ones, as to draw off a portion of the patronage which would otherwise be bestowed upon them, detaches a portion of the community from the great mass, and weakens or destroys their interest in those means of education which are common to the whole people.

The character and influence of this enlightened and efficient part of the community, who thus secede from the whole, will be found in the end, when, perhaps, it is too late to remedy the evil, to be a loss, which has not yet been duly estimated. Their property may be, cheerfully, yielded to support the public schools, but their wisdom is needed to direct them. The remote good of an improved state of society, and the security and happiness of being surrounded by more intelligent neighbours, may, for a time, be sufficient to control the purses of people, but their hearts will most surely follow and abide with their own children. Now if the public academies, or at least some of them, be not new modelled and improved so as to meet the demands of even those, who demand the most, there must inevitably a portion of interest in them, soon secede from their support. And by the by, (may it be at some very distant day) when our population comes to be crowded; when our numbers have become so great as to press hard upon the means of subsistence; when property comes to be more unequally distributed than it now is; when the rich become more insolent and the poor more depressed, more hungry, and more factious; then will jealousies arise, and grow strong, between the different classes of the community; then will the children of the higher classes be contaminated by contact with those of the lower; then will general and public interest yield to particular and private interest; then will a large portion of the property be withheld from the means of popular education, or be extorted from unwilling owners; then will the several classes, being educated differently and without a knowledge of each other, imbibe mutual prejudices and hatreds, and entail them upon posterity from generation to generation. This may be refining a little too much, or looking a little too deeply into futurity, but it is the natural tendency of things, upon sound principles of political reasoning. Circumstances may conspire to hasten or retard the time, but the time will come, when those who hold most property, will not be so zealous, as they now are, to urge it upon others for their better education. Charity between individuals, is soon tired, when it begins to be abused. And a policy in government, however generous and noble it may be, operating in favour of the more ignorant and the weaker part of the community at the expense of the wiser and the stronger.

will soon be abandoned, when it begins to be perverted. May our rulers look to this natural and powerful tendency of things, and check it while it may be checked ; or counteract its influence as far as it may be counteracted. And what means are there so likely to do this as an efficient system of popular education, which shall bring out and put in vigorous action and keep in constant and struggling competition the greatest amount of intellect among all classes!

ESSAY IV.

ACADEMIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE FREE SCHOOLS.

THE academies were unknown in Massachusetts before the revolution. The oldest of these institutions is Phillips' Academy at Andover, the date of whose charter is 1780. Before this time, all public schools, it should seem, were also free. The number of these seminaries or high schools did not much increase for many years after the close of the revolutionary war. But, during a short period, about ten or fifteen years since, they were multiplied to a very great extent. The people of Massachusetts, always desirous of following the policy of the pilgrims of Plymouth in regard to schools, seemed for a time absurdly to suppose, that they had but to get an academy incorporated and established in their neighbourhood, and that their children would be educated without farther trouble. But in this too sanguine expectation, they have been most of them somewhat disappointed. An act of incorporation has not been found, on experiment, to be quite so efficacious as was, at first, anticipated. And many of these institutions, which, in the imagination of their projectors, rose at once almost to the dignity of colleges, are now found in a very inefficient, indeed, in a most wretched condition.

The legislature of the State, then willing and anxious to encourage "learning and good morals" among the people,—a duty, which the constitution solemnly enjoins upon them,—by all means in their power, granted as many acts of incorporation as were petitioned for; and to many of these corporations, in token of their good will, they appropriated townships of land in the interior and northerly part of Maine, which then formed a part of Massachusetts. Some of these townships of land, by the way, it is to be feared

may be found on the wrong side of the boundary line to be drawn between Maine and the British Provinces. So far as this policy evinced a desire to encourage the diffusion of knowledge, it should receive the commendation, which good intentions always deserve ; but, for all practical purposes for perhaps fifty years from the date of these charters and appropriations, the legislature might about as well have assigned to the petitioners for them a tract of the Moon.

When these hungry corporate beings had been created by the legislature, and their first cries for sustenance had been soothed by the unsavoury dish of eastern lands, they were then abandoned to the charity of their friends ; or, if they proved cold, to a lingering death by starvation. The eastern lands, which constituted the patrimony of the State, were in most cases utterly unavailable. The benevolence of friends was, generally, exhausted in accumulating the means to erect suitable buildings. And the corporation were left to rely upon their own sagacity for procuring other resources to put their institution in operation. The more essential, indeed, almost the only essential part of a good academy, viz : a good instructor, was left unprovided for. The only expedient which remained, was, to support the teacher by a tax upon the scholars. It seemed but reasonable that those, who enjoyed the exclusive benefit of the institution, should pay for their own instruction. But this condition, though perhaps but a small sum was required of each pupil in order to produce an adequate salary for an instructor, removed the advantages of the academies, at once, beyond the reach of a large proportion of the inhabitants. The appropriations of the State, therefore, for the support of these schools, if they benefitted any body in particular, surely benefitted not the poor, but the rich and middling classes of the community. At least, these enjoyed the chief advantage of them, the direct rays of the State's favour ; while the poor could feel only a dim reflection of them.

That the academies, at least, those of them which have been put and sustained in a tolerably respectable condition, have been a great accommodation to a few of our inhabitants, cannot be doubted. And how few are those, who have received any advantages from them, may be easily estimated by comparing the small number of children instructed in them, with the whole number in the Commonwealth. Still these are, or may be, useful institutions.

I have certainly no desire to lessen the high repute, in which they seem to be held. On the contrary, I wish they were in higher estimation than they really are. And, what is more, I wish they were more worthy of that estimation. But they should be appreciated for the character which they possess, and never for that which they do not possess. And they are not establishments for the instruction of the poor. Neither can they be relied upon as efficient means for the education of the mass or even a majority of the people; because as has been before intimated, their conditions exclude nineteen twentieths of the whole population of the State from a participation of their advantages. If they are sustained, therefore, it must be upon some other ground. What that ground is, it is not my purpose now to inquire. But what has been their influence upon the free or town schools?

One influence, which they undoubtedly have had, has been to prepare young instructors *some* better than they could be prepared in the town schools themselves. This is a good influence. And if the same object could not be attained much better by other means, it would deserve great consideration in estimating the utility, which we are to expect from those establishments for the future. But the preparation of instructors for the free schools, never formed a part of the original design of the academies. They were intended to afford instruction in other and higher branches of education, than those usually taught in the free schools; and not merely to give better instruction in the same branches. Much less did it come within the wide scope of their purposes to give instruction in the science of teaching generally. So that the little good derived from them in this respect is only incidental.

The preparation of instructors for free schools is a subject of such moment to this community, that it will hardly be thought expedient, on reflection, to trust it to chance or to incidents. Experience and observation have convinced those, who have attended to the subject, that adequate instructors for the free schools are not prepared by these incidental means. In order to be efficient and effectual in attaining that desirable object, means must be applied directly to it. But of the education of instructors, more by and by. I wish merely now to say, and I trust I have shown, that the academies cannot be relied upon for

accomplishing that object, so as in any good degree to meet the demands and answer the reasonable expectations of the community.

But the academies have had another influence upon the public town schools, which has much impaired their usefulness, and, if not soon checked, it will ultimately destroy them. This influence, operating for a series of years, has led, already, to the abandonment of a part of the free school system, and to a depreciation in the character and prospects of the remaining part. And it is working, not slowly, the destruction of the vital principle of the institution, more valuable to us than any other, for the preservation of enlightened freedom. The pernicious influence, to which I allude, will be better understood, by taking an example of its operation on a small scale; and then extending the same principle of examination to the whole State, or to New England.

Take any ten contiguous towns in the interior of this Commonwealth, and suppose an academy to be placed in the centre of them. An academy, as I have before observed, commonly means a corporation, with a township of land in Maine, given them by the State, and a pretty convenient house, built generally by the patriotic subscriptions of those who expect to use it; the instructor being supported, chiefly or altogether, by a separate tax on the scholars. In each of these ten towns, select the six individuals, who have families to educate, who set the highest value on early education, and who are able to defray the expenses of the best which can be had, either in a private school among themselves, or at the academy, which, by the supposition, is in their neighbourhood. Now of what immediate consequence can it be to the six families of each town, or to the sixty families of the ten towns, whether there be such a thing as a free school in the Commonwealth or not! They have a general interest in them, to be sure, because they have themselves been there instructed, and the early associations of childhood and youth are strong; and they have a sort of speculative belief, if it be not rather an innate sentiment, that free schools make a free people. But how are their own particular, personal, and immediate interests affected? Without any libel upon good nature, these are the main springs to human actions. These are the motives, which find their way soonest to the human heart, and influ-

ence most powerfully and steadily the opinions of men, and the conduct founded upon and resulting from them.

As soon as difficulties and disagreements, in regard to the free schools, arise, as they necessarily must, upon various topics; such as, the amount of money to be raised, the distribution of it among the several districts, the manner of appropriation, whether it be to the "summer schools" or to the "winter schools," to pay an instructor from this family or from that family, of higher qualifications or of lower qualifications, of this or that political or religious creed, or a thousand other questions which are constantly occurring; if any of our six families happen to be dissatisfied or disgusted with any course which may be adopted, they will, immediately, abandon the free schools, and provide for the education of their children in their own way. They may organize a private school, for their own convenience, upon such principles as they most approve. Or, they may send their scholars, at an expense trifling to them, to the academy in their neighbourhood. Well, what if they do? The free schools remain, all taxes are paid, cheerfully, for their support, and the number of scholars is lessened. What is the evil of their sending their children somewhere else to be educated? We should, at first, suppose that it would be an advantage; inasmuch as the amount of money to be expended would be left the same, and the number of pupils to receive the benefit of it would be considerably diminished.

But the evils of this course, and of the general policy of the State government, which has led to it, are very serious ones. When the six individuals of any country town, who are, by the supposition, first in point of wealth and interest in the subject, and who will generally be also first in point of intelligence and influence in town affairs, withdraw their children from the common schools; there are, at the same time, withdrawn a portion of intelligence from their direction and heartfelt interest from their support. This intelligence is needed, to manage the delicate and important concerns of the schools. And this heartfelt interest is needed, to lead the way to improvements, to stimulate and encourage larger and larger appropriations, and to ensure vigilance in their expenditure. Patriotism and philanthropy are dull motives to exertions for the improvement of common schools compared with parental

affection. And this quickening power has gone off to the academies or somewhere else with the children, who are the objects of it.

Look at the operation of this influence of the academies upon the free schools, on a still smaller scale. Examine the condition of the latter in the very towns, where academies are placed ; and where, if their influence be a happy one, we should expect to find the common schools in the best condition. What is the fact ? From observation and from information collected from authentic sources, the assertion may be hazarded that the condition of the free schools will be found, on examination, to be worse, far worse, in those towns than in any others. And it is for this plain reason : because those, who can barely afford the expense of tuition, will send their children to the academy, which the state or benevolent individuals have built up for their accommodation, and give themselves no farther trouble about the free schools, but to pay the tax-bill for their support when it is presented.

Thus the men, who would have the most interest in the subject, the most intelligence and the most leisure to conduct the concerns of the town schools, secede from them, and join themselves to other institutions. Abolish the academy and leave these six families of each town to the free schools alone, and you would find all their powers assiduously employed to put them in the best condition possible. Or rather put the free schools in a state to afford as good instruction as the academies now do, and you would supersede in a great degree the necessity of them. And it is apprehended, that it would be quite easy to place them upon a footing to give even better instruction, at least, in all the elementary branches of a common education, than the academies now give or ever have given. If the principles suggested above for the examination of our means of popular education be correct, and if the influence of the private establishments upon the academies, and of the academies upon the free schools be really such as it has been described to be, my readers, by following out the inquiries which those principles lead to, in all their relations and bearings, cannot fail to convince themselves, that something may be done, as well as much said upon this subject.

ESSAY V.

FAULTS OF THE FREE SCHOOLS.

TOWARDS the close of my third essay, a comparison was instituted between the academies and those private establishments, which begin and will continue to grow up, while the former do not afford as good instruction, as can be procured in this or in any country. The conclusion was, that as a means of public instruction, the academies are, decidedly, the most to be relied upon; because their conditions do not exclude more than *nineteen twentieths* of the people, from the free enjoyment of their advantages; whereas, the private establishments of high character, are beyond the reach of at least *ninety-nine hundredths*. In my last essay, a comparison, upon the same principles, was drawn between the academies and the free schools. - And the conclusion was, that we cannot safely rely upon the former, either for directly instructing the mass of the people, who are found only in the free schools, or for preparing instructors for them, and thus, indirectly, accomplishing the same object. Our only reliance, therefore, is upon the town schools; because access to them is open to all. Whereas, certainly not more than one twentieth, and probably not more than one fiftieth of the whole population can gain admittance to the academies at all. Hence, if any measures are to be taken, or any appropriations to be made by the legislature for the diffusion of knowledge generally, it should seem that the free schools demand their first attention. They are the foundation not only of our whole system of public instruction, but of all our free institutions. Let our rulers take care, then, that this basis be not allowed to crumble away on any pretence. If it do so, there will be wrenching in the political fabric, when it will be too late to apply a

brace,—disorder and confusion, when it will be too late to take the alarm,—and impending ruin when it will be too late to escape it. But let this foundation be laid deep and firm, not only in the constitution and the laws of our country; but also in the heads and the hearts of our countrymen. The care of the higher seminaries of learning, the ornaments of our system of popular education, will more appropriately follow.

Before we attempt, however, to take a single step towards reform let us see what we have to amend. Unless faults can be shown to exist in the organization of our system of popular education, and great ones; it will do but little good to recommend improvements. For it is with communities as with individuals; and “no one,” says Fisher Ames, “is less likely to improve, than the coxcomb, who fancies he has already learned out.” The pride, which we of New England have been accustomed to feel and, perhaps, to manifest, in our free schools, as the best in the country, and in the world, has not improved their condition. But, on the contrary, the great complacency with which we contemplate this institution is a most effectual bar to all improvements in it. The time has come, when we owe it to our country and ourselves to speak the whole truth in this matter, even though it disturb our self-satisfaction a little.

It will be convenient to point out the faults of the public provisions for popular education under the two following heads; first, the “Summer Free Schools,” which are, generally, taught in the country towns for a few months in the warm season of the year by females; and second, the “Winter Free Schools,” which are taught by men, commonly, for a shorter period, during the cold season. Children of both sexes of from four to ten or twelve years, usually attend these primary summer schools, and females often to a much later age.* This is a very interesting period of human life. No one, who has reflected much upon the subject of early discipline; no one, I trust, who has even followed me through the preceding essays, can doubt, that it is one of the most important parts, if not the very most important part of our lives, as it regards the influence of education in its widest sense. It is important as it re-

* See Letters on the Free Schools of New England, pp. 29—32.

gards the developement of the powers of the body, or physical education. Because the parts of the body, the limbs, the muscles, the organs, or whatever are the technical names for them, now assume a firmness and consistency in discharging their proper functions, or they become distorted and enfeebled; and these habits, thus early contracted, become a part of ourselves and are as abiding as our lives. Yet what has been done in this branch of education? Nothing at all, absolutely nothing at all, even in our best schools. This period is vitally important as it regards the cultivation of the heart and its affections. What has been done here? Chance and ill-directed efforts make up all the education, which we have received or are giving to our children in the schools in this department. Finally, it is important to us, as it regards the discipline of the head, the developement of the understanding and its faculties. What have we done in this department? We have done something, indeed, and think that we have done much. We have done, and we continue to do, *more* than we do *well*. We resort to many expedients and apply many means, without distinctly understanding, either what we wish to attain, whether it be possible to attain it, or if so, the adaptation of our means to its attainment. Success here, therefore, if the best possible results have ever been gained in any instance, has been more the result of chance than of skill.

To whom do we assign the business of governing and instructing our children from four to twelve years of age? Who take upon themselves the trust of forming those principles and habits, which are to be strengthened and confirmed in manhood, and make our innocent little ones through life, happy or miserable in themselves, and the blessings or the curses of society? To analyze, in detail, the habits, which are formed and confirmed in these first schools, to trace the abiding influence of good ones, or to describe the inveteracy of bad ones, would lead me from my present purpose. But are these interesting years of life and these important branches of education committed to those, who understand their importance or their influence upon the future character? Are they committed to those, who would know what to do, to discharge their high trust successfully if they did, indeed, understand their importance? I think not. And I am persuaded, that all,

who have reflected but for a moment upon the age, the acquirements, and the experience of those who assume to conduct this branch of education, must have come to the same conclusion.

The teachers of the primary summer schools have rarely had any education beyond what they have acquired in the very schools where they begin to teach. Their attainments, therefore, to say the least, are usually *very moderate*. But this is not the worst of it. They are often very young, they are constantly changing their employment, and consequently can have but little experience; and what is worse than all, they never have had any direct preparation for their profession. This is the only service, in which we venture to employ young, and often, ignorant persons, without some previous instruction in their appropriate duties. We require experience in all those, whom we employ to perform the slightest mechanical labour for us. We would not buy a coat or a hat of one, who should undertake to make them without a previous apprenticeship. Nor would any one have the hardihood to offer to us the result of his first essay in manufacturing either of these articles. We do not even send an old shoe to be mended, except it be to a workman of whose skill we have had ample proof. Yet we commit our children to be educated to those, who know nothing, absolutely nothing, of the complicated and difficult duties assigned to them. Shall we trust the development of the delicate bodies, the susceptible hearts, and the tender minds of our little children to those who have no knowledge of their nature? Can they, can these rude hands finish the workmanship of the Almighty? No language can express the astonishment, which a moments reflection on this subject excites in me.

But I must return to the examination of the qualifications of the female teachers of the primary summer schools, from which purpose I have unconsciously a little departed to indulge in a general remark. They are a class of teachers unknown in our laws regulating the schools unless it be by some latitude of construction. No standard of attainments is fixed, at which they must arrive before they assume the business of instruction. So that any one *keeps school*, which is a very different thing from *teaching school*, who wishes to do it, and can persuade, by herself, or her friends, a small district to employ her. And this is not a very difficult mat-

ter, especially when the remuneration for the employment is so very trifling. The farce of an examination and a certificate from the minister of the town, for it is a perfect farce, amounts to no efficient check upon the obtrusions of ignorance and inexperience. As no standard is fixed by law, each minister makes a standard for himself, and alters it as often as the peculiar circumstances of the case require. And there will always be enough of peculiar circumstances to render a refusal inexpedient.

Let those, who are conversant with the manner in which these schools are managed, say, whether this description of them undervalues their character and efficacy. Let those, who conduct them, pause and consider whether all is well, and whether there are not abuses and perversions in them, which call loudly for attention and reformation. Compare the acquirements, the experience, the knowledge of teaching possessed by these instructors, not one with another, for the standard is much too low; but with what they might be, under more favourable circumstances and with proper preparation. Compare the improvement made in these little nurseries of piety and religion, of knowledge and rational liberty, not one with another, for the progress in all of them is much too slow; but with what the infant mind and heart are capable of, at this early age, under the most favourable auspices. And there can be no doubt, that all will arrive at the same conclusions; a dissatisfaction with the condition of these schools; and an astonishment, that the public have been so long contented with so small results from means, which all will acknowledge capable of doing so much.

The faults of the primary summer schools, then, are, a want of adequate acquirements, a want of experience, and a total want of any direct preparation of their teachers for their employment. These must be acknowledged to be great faults; and they have affected and will continue to affect, essentially, the usefulness of the schools. Neither reason, observation, nor experience leaves reflecting men any consoling probability, that these defects will be remedied, or the condition of the schools be essentially improved, under their present organization. As to the acquirements of female teachers; there is no standard, to which they must be brought for decision, except on moral quali-

fications. As to experience, they have usually none, and they can never have but little; because they are constantly leaving their employment and new teachers assuming it, without any system of their own, or any plan laid down for their direction. As to direct preparation for the business of teaching; such a thing was never heard of. But cannot some system or arrangement be devised, by which the experience or the results of the experience of those, who have gone successfully over the ground, may be communicated to the younger teachers, without the necessity of their going over the same ground, and under precisely the same disadvantages, all at the expense of the pupils.

Many of the above remarks upon the character and qualifications of the teachers of the summer schools apply with equal force to the young men, who undertake the instruction of the primary winter schools, which now constitute the highest class of schools, to which the whole population of the state have free access. My remarks upon this class of instructors must also be general; and as all general rules have their exceptions, every individual will, of course, consider himself as particularly excused. What are the acquirements of these young men, who assume the delicate and responsible duty of governing and instructing a school of fifty or a hundred children. We have a catalogue, perhaps an ample one, of branches of knowledge, which the laws suppose the candidates for the place of teacher to be possessed of. But who knows that they come up to established standard? And who knows that they are fully possessed of the knowledge, which the laws require? And who knows, if they do possess it, that they will be able to communicate it to their pupils? This is no trifling consideration in estimating the value and usefulness of an instructor? The laws provide that the minister and the selectmen of each town shall assure themselves, that their teachers possess the prescribed qualifications. The minister. Which minister? There may be, and not unfrequently are, at the present day, half a dozen in the town. When the school-law was enacted, in 1789, our towns were not broken up as they now are, and are likely to be for the future, into small parishes.

Here, then, are six ministers in the same town, of different denominations. of different characters. of different discrimination, and of different qualifications, some of them.

perhaps, hardly qualified to teach school themselves. Now which one or two among them all shall decide on the qualifications of teachers? Why let every one decide on the qualifications of the instructors employed in his own parish. This is very plausible, but not at all practicable. The different parishes are made up of families from every part of the town; whereas the several school districts are, and necessarily must be, laid out without any reference to them. The same school district, therefore, may, and probably will, contain families, many or few, from every parish in the town. Then some *one* of the six ministers may decide upon the qualifications of instructors for the whole town, which those belonging to other parishes than his own would certainly not agree to; or each must be clothed with that power for the whole. What! will you allow the itinerant preacher, who has only stopped for a few sabbaths, or for a few months, to license instructors for the whole town? This is a result, which it seems must follow.

But the minister must be "settled." Then comes the question what is a "settled" minister? When we are not in the heat of controversy, we can understand such ambiguous language. But the laws do not define what constitutes a settled minister. The "Cambridge Platform" is not the acknowledged law of the land, upon this subject. The parish, and any thing is now a parish, may define the mode, in which the relation between them and their preacher shall be solemnized. And who can interfere, and say that a preacher "settled" *only* by a vote of uplifted hands is not a minister within the intention of the school-law of 1789. The looseness of this law has, already, led to difficulties in some places, and the only reason it has not in more, is, that there is too much indifference to the subject of schools and teachers generally, to induce men to quarrel about them. We have a law indeed and a bench for justice; but we have no judge, or rather any one judges, who chooses to do so.

Other considerations readily suggest themselves to all, who are acquainted with the relation subsisting between country clergymen and their parishes, why they should be relieved of the responsibility of deciding upon the qualifications of teachers. Experience has long since proved, that their decision does not ensure to the public competent instructors, which alone is sufficient reason why the duty of

selecting them should be imposed upon others. The clergy were once the only learned profession and almost the only learned men in New England. Now, there are others. The task of deciding upon the qualifications of teachers is invidious, and those should perform it, whose usefulness depends least on popular favour.

The young man, who lays down his axe and aspires to take up the "rod" and rule in a village school, has, usually, in common with other young men, a degree of dignity and self-complacency, which it is dangerous to the extent of his power to disturb. And when he comes to his minister, sustained by his own influence in the parish, and that of a respectable father and perhaps a large family of friends, and asks of him the legal approbation for a teacher, it is a pretty delicate matter to refuse it. A firm and conscientious refusal of approbation to a school-master, has led, in more instances than one, to a firm and conscientious refusal to hear the minister preach. And, by the parish difficulties growing out of so small an affair, he has found himself at last "unsettled" and thrown with his family, perhaps in his old age, upon the world to seek and gain his subsistence as he may. This is truly martyrdom. And martyrs in ordinary times are rare. Even good men can make peace with their consciences on better terms. So much for the literary qualifications of instructors.*

It is the intention of the school-law to secure good, moral characters in the public instructors by requiring the approbation, as to this qualification, of the selectmen of the town, where the school is to be taught. No doubt selectmen are as good judges of morality as any body of men, which could readily be appealed to. But either we are a very moral people, or they are not very discriminating; for instances are rare, indeed, of refusal of their approbation on this ground. If a young man be moral enough to keep out of the State-Prison, he will find no difficulty in getting approbation for a school-master. These

* Since the original publication of these essays, in 1824, an act has passed the legislature of Massachusetts, which provides among other things that a committee of not less than five persons shall be chosen annually to superintend the schools of each town, and decide upon the qualifications of teachers. So that the clergy, whether they happen to be of the committee or not, are now virtually relieved from the embarrassing duty which they have hitherto been obliged to perform.

things ought not to be so. Both the moral and the intellectual character of the rising generation are influenced more by their instructors, during the period of from four to twelve years of age, than by any cause so entirely within our control. It becomes then of momentous concern to the community, in a moral and religious, as well as in political point of view, that this influence should be the greatest and the best possible. That it is not now so, every one, I trust, who has followed me through my preceding essays, is convinced. And if something be not done, and that speedily, to improve the condition of the free schools, and especially the primary *summer schools*, they will not only fail of their happiest influence, but in a short time of all influence which will be worth estimating.

If the policy of the legislature, in regard to free schools, for the last twenty years be not changed, the institution, which has been the glory of New England will, in twenty years more, be extinct. If the State continue to relieve themselves of the trouble of providing for the instruction of the whole people, and to shift the responsibility upon the towns, and the towns upon the districts, and the districts upon individuals, each will take care of himself and his own family as he is able, and as he appreciates the blessing of a good education. The rich will, as a class, have much better instruction than they now have, while the poor will have much worse or none at all. The academies and private schools will be carried to much greater perfection than they have been, while the public free schools will become stationary or retrograde; till at length, they will be thrown for support upon the gratuitous, and of course capricious and uncertain efforts of individuals; and then, like the lower schools of the crowded cities of Europe, they will soon degenerate into mere mechanical establishments, such as the famous *seminaries* of London, Birmingham, and Manchester of which we hear so much lately, not for rational, moral and intellectual instruction of human beings, but for training young animals to march, sing, and draw figures in sand,—establishments, in which the power of one man is so prodigiously multiplied, that he can overlook, direct and control the intellectual exercises of a thousand! And this wretched mockery of education, they must be right glad to accept as a charity, instead of inheriting as their birthright as good instruction as the country affords.

ESSAY VI.

OUTLINE OF AN INSTITUTION FOR THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS.

I HAVE now pointed to a few of the defects in our system of popular education. I have remarked upon the policy of the legislature of the State, in regard to it, as having the obvious tendency to depreciate the character of the free schools. I have also shown the looseness and confusion of our laws upon the subject, in a manner, which I trust has produced conviction, that they are now perfectly nugatory ; both as it regards the literary and the moral qualifications of the teachers. We have outgrown them as we outgrow the garments of our childhood. They might have fitted very well forty years ago, but they certainly look very awkwardly now. And it is high time they were thrown off, and something adopted, which may be more suited to the taste and character of the age. I have made some remarks upon the teachers of the free schools, both male and female, and it was my original purpose to go more fully into detail in the examination of their characters and qualifications in connexion with their duties. But I must now forbear, and take for granted, what it will be very easy to show if it should be necessary, their incompetency to govern and instruct the schools, so as to bring from them the happy results, which these same schools under better management are capable of producing. With these remarks I leave the business of fault-finding, which is sometimes a necessary, though always an invidious task.

The more agreeable, though perhaps more difficult part of my plan, remains, viz : to suggest remedies for supplying some of the defects, and correcting some of the abuses, which have been already pointed out. This part of the subject, too, "branches out into an infinity," which puts it

quite beyond my power to go into detail. But, it is apprehended, this is not now necessary. It was necessary, however, to dwell at some length upon a few of the moral and political advantages of a correct system of education; and it was necessary to point out, somewhat in detail, the defects and abuses of our schools, in order to show that a reform was required,—*a thorough and radical reform*. But I am not visionary enough to suppose for a moment, that a change involving such important interests and consequences,—a change requiring such bold innovations upon established usages, as a new organization of our system of public instruction, however desirable it may be in itself, can be affected suddenly. I know that it cannot. It is a sound maxim, that reforms on all moral and religious subjects are slow and progressive. Political changes, too, unless they are affected by violence and revolution, are also slow. And there is no reason to suppose, that a reform in the organization of our schools, or in the principles of government and instruction adopted in them, is an exception to the general rule. But I am persuaded, that some changes and improvements in our schools are most necessary; and I trust they have been proved to be so. In order, therefore to complete the design, which I proposed to myself to accomplish in these essays, it only remains, to sketch in a very concise manner, how and where, as it seems to me, we should begin a reformation; the future being left to take care of itself. There will, no doubt, be opportunities to pursue the subject more at length, hereafter.

In this view of the general subject of popular education, all that immediately concerns us, is reduced to a very small compass. Two objects embrace the whole. First, to provide competent teachers; and second, to secure to the public their employment as such. Indeed, the latter of these objects is so entirely subsequent to the former, that we may fairly say, that we have, at present, to attend to but one single object, and that is, to provide competent teachers.

The character of the schools, and of course their political, moral, and religious influence upon the community, depend, almost solely, upon the character of the teachers. Their influence is strong or weak, just in proportion as the instructors are skilful or ignorant—energetic or feeble; it is in this direction or that direction, just as they are imbued with one or another principle. So that whatever is done

to elevate the character of teachers, elevates, at the same time, and in the same degree, the character of the schools which they teach, and enlarges and strengthens their influence upon the community. And whatever is done or suffered to lower the character of the teachers, must sink, at the same time and in the same degree, the character of the schools, and destroy or pervert their influence upon society. Many other considerations must be taken into account in organizing a perfect and an energetic system of public instruction. These are some of them; a generous appropriation of money to the purpose, a proper classification of scholars, an efficient and independent tribunal to ensure competency in teachers and to overlook, examine, and report to the public whether their duties have been faithfully performed, and lastly, good books. But all of these objects though highly important, are subsequent in their nature to the preparation of teachers. And no one of them can be attempted with a reasonable expectation of accomplishing it to the greatest advantage, till good teachers are provided and ready for the work.

It will do but little good, for example, for the legislature of the State to make large appropriations directly for the support of schools, till a judicious expenditure of them can be ensured. And in order to this, we must have skilful teachers at hand. It will do but little good to class the children till we have instructors properly prepared to take charge of the classes. It will do absolutely no good to constitute an independent tribunal to decide on the qualifications of teachers, while they have not had the opportunities necessary for coming up to the proper standard. And it will do no good to overlook and report upon their success, when we know beforehand, that they have not the means of success. It would be beginning wrong, too, to build houses and to tell your young and inexperienced instructors to teach this or to teach that subject; however desirable a knowledge of such subjects might be, while it is obvious that they cannot know how properly, to teach any subject. The *science of teaching*, for it must be made a science, is first, in the order of nature, to be inculcated. And it is to this point that the public attention must first be turned, to affect any essential improvement.

And here let me remark upon a distinction in the qualifications of teachers, which has never been practically

made ; though it seems astonishing that it has so long escaped notice. I allude to the distinction between the possession of knowledge, and the ability to communicate it to other minds. When we are looking for a teacher, we inquire how much he *knows*, not how much he can *communicate* ; as if the latter qualification were of no consequence to us. Now it seems to me, that parents and children, to say the least, are as much interested in the latter qualification of their instructor as in the former.

Though a teacher cannot communicate more knowledge than he possesses ; yet he may possess much, and still be able to impart but little. And the knowledge of Sir Isaac Newton could be of but trifling use to a school, while it was locked up safely in the head of a country schoolmaster. So far as the object of a school or of instruction, therefore, is the acquisition of knowledge, novel as the opinion may seem, it does appear to me, that both parents and pupils are even more interested in the part of their teacher's knowledge, which they will be likely to get, than in the part which they certainly cannot get.

One great object in the education of teachers which it is so desirable on every account to attain, is, to establish an intelligible language of communication between the instructor and his pupil, and enable the former to open his head and his heart, and infuse into the other, some of the thoughts and feelings, which lie hid there. *Instructors and pupils do not understand each other.* They do not speak the same language. They may use the same words ; but this can hardly be called the same language, while they attach to them such very different meanings. We must either, by some magic or supernatural power, bring children, at once, to comprehend all our abstract and difficult terms ; or our teachers must unlearn themselves, and come down to the comprehension of children. One of these alternatives is only difficult, while the other is impossible.

The direct, careful preparation of instructors for the profession of teaching must surmount this difficulty ; and I doubt if there be any other way, in which it can be surmounted. When instructors understand their profession ; that is, in a word, when they understand the philosophy of the infant mind, what powers are earliest developed, and what studies are best adapted to their development ; then it will be time to lay out and subdivide their work into an

energetic system of public instruction. Till this step towards a reform, which is preliminary in its very nature, be taken, every other measure must be adopted in the dark ; and, therefore, be liable to fail utterly of its intended result. Houses and funds and books are all, indeed, important ; but they are only the means of enabling the minds of the teachers to act upon the minds of the pupils. And they must, inevitably, fail of their happiest effects, till the minds of the teachers have been prepared to act upon those of their pupils to the greatest advantage.

If, then, the first step towards a reform in our system of popular education be the scientific preparation of teachers for the free schools ; our next inquiry becomes, how can we soonest and most perfectly achieve an object on every account so desirable ? The ready and obvious answer is, establish an institution for the very purpose. To my mind, this seems to be the only measure, which will ensure to the public the attainment of the object. It will be called a new project. Be it so. The concession does not prove, that the project is a bad one, or a visionary, or an impracticable one. Our ancestors ventured to do what the world had never done before, in so perfect a manner, when they established the free schools. Let us also do what they have never so well done yet, and establish an institution for the exclusive purpose of preparing instructors for them. This is only a second part, a development or consummation of the plan of our fathers. They foresaw the effect of universal intelligence upon national virtue and happiness ; and they projected the means of securing to themselves and to us universal education. They wisely did a new thing under the sun. It has proved to be a good thing. We now enjoy the results of their labours, and we are sensible of the enjoyment. Their posterity have praised them, loudly praised them, for the wisdom of their efforts. Let us, then, with hints from them, project and accomplish another new thing, and confer as great a blessing on those who may come after us. Let us finish the work of our fathers, in regard to popular education, and give to it its full effect. Let us double, for we easily may, the happy influences of an institution, which has already attracted so much notice from every part of our country, and drawn after it so many imitations ; and send it, thus improved, down to posterity for their admiration.

If a seminary for the purpose of educating teachers scientifically be essential in order to give the greatest efficacy to our system of popular education; then, in the progress of the discussion, the three following questions arise in the order in which they are stated. By whom should the proposed institution be established? What would be its leading features? And what would be some of the peculiar advantages to the public, which would result from it. To answer these several questions at length would require a book; while I have, at present, only leisure to prepare one or two newspaper-essays. A few hints, therefore, upon the above three topics are all that I dare profess to give, and more than I fear I can give, either to my own satisfaction or that of those readers, who may have become interested in the subject.

The institution from its peculiar purpose must necessarily be both literary and scientific in its character. And although, with its design constantly in view, we could not reasonably expect it to add, directly, much to the stock of what is now called literature, or to enlarge much the boundaries of what is now called science; yet, from the very nature of the subject to which it would be devoted, and upon which it would be employed, it must in its progress create a kind of literature of its own, and open a new science somewhat peculiar to itself—the science of the development of the infant mind, and the science of communicating knowledge from one mind to another while in a different stage of maturity. The tendency of the inquiries which must be carried on, and the discoveries which would be constantly made, in a seminary for this new purpose, would be to give efficacy to the pursuits of other literary and scientific institutions. Its influence, therefore, though indirect, would be not the less powerful upon the cause of literature and the sciences generally. These remarks may seem to anticipate another part of my subject; but they are introduced here, to show, that a seminary for the education of teachers, would stand, at least, on as favourable a footing in relation to the public as other literary and scientific institutions. It seems now to be believed that the Legislature of the State are the rightful proprietors of all public institutions for the diffusion of knowledge. And if they are of any, they certainly ought to be of one for such a purpose. Because there are none in which the

public would be more deeply interested. There are none, which would tend so much to diffuse knowledge among the whole mass of the people. And this, as has been before remarked, is a solemn duty enjoined upon our government by the constitution, under which they are organized, and from which they derive their authority. Besides it is the first impulse of every government, operating as quickly and as steadily as instinct, to provide for its own preservation. And it seems to be conceded on all hands, by the friends as well as the enemies of freedom, that a government like our own can only exist among a people generally enlightened; the only question as to the permanency of free institutions being, whether it be possible to make and to keep the *whole* population of a nation so well educated as the existence of such institutions supposes and requires.

Our government, therefore, are urged by every motive, which the constitution can enjoin or self-preservation suggest to see to it, that knowledge is generally diffused among the people. Upon this subject of popular education, a *free* government must be *arbitrary*. For its existence depends upon it. The more ignorant and degraded people are, the less do they feel the want of instruction, and the less will they seek it. And these are the classes of a community, which always increase the fastest up to the very point, where the means of subsistence fail. So that if any one class of men, however small, be suffered as a body, to remain in ignorance, and to allow their families to grow up without instruction, they will increase in a greater ratio compared with their numbers, than the more enlightened classes, till they have a preponderance of physical power. And when this preponderance becomes overwhelming, what hinders a revolution, and an arbitrary government, by which the mind of a few can control the physical strength of the many.

If this reasoning be correct, a free government must look to it betimes, that popular ignorance does not gain upon them. If it do, there is a thistle in the vineyard of the republic, which will grow and spread itself in every direction, till it cannot be eradicated. The ignorant must be allured to learn, by every motive which can be offered to them. And if they will not thus be allured, they must be taken by the strong arm of government and brought out, willing

or unwilling, and made to learn, at least, enough to make them peaceable and good citizens. It would be well, indeed, if the possibility could be held out to all of successfully aspiring to responsible stations in society. A faint hope is better than despair. And though only one chance in a thousand be favourable, even that is worth something to stimulate the young to greater efforts to become worthy of distinction. The few, who under all the disadvantages, which adverse circumstances impose, can find their way by untired perseverance to places of trust and influence in the republic, serve to give identity of feeling, of purpose and pursuit to the whole. They harmonise and bind together all those different and distant classes of the community, between which fretful jealousies naturally subsist.

These are hints, only, at an argument, perhaps unintelligible ones, to establish the principle, that free governments are the proprietors of all literary and scientific institutions so far as they have the tendency to diffuse knowledge generally among the people. The free schools of Massachusetts, as the most efficient means of accomplishing that object, should therefore be the property and the peculiar care of government. An argument will, at once, be drawn from these principles why they should assume the direction of the schools, so far as to ensure to the people over whom they are appointed to preside, competent teachers of them. And as this is the main purpose of the proposed institution, the reasoning seems to be conclusive, why they should be its proprietor, or, at least, its patron and protector.

An institution for the education of teachers, as has been before intimated, would form a part, and a very important part of the free school system. It would be, moreover, precisely that portion of the system, which should be under the direction of the State whether the others are or not. Because we should thus secure at once, an uniform, intelligent and independent tribunal for decisions on the qualifications of teachers. Because we should thus relieve the clergy of an invidious task, and ensure to the public competent teachers, if such could be found or prepared. An institution for this purpose would become by its influence on society, and particularly on the young, an engine to sway the public sentiment, the public morals, and the public religion, more powerful than any other in the pos-

session of government. It should, therefore, be responsible immediately to them. And they should, carefully, overlook it ; and prevent its being perverted to other purposes, directly or indirectly, than those for which it is designed. It should be emphatically the State's institution. And its results would soon make it the State's favourite and pride, among other literary and scientific institutions. The Legislature of the State should, therefore, establish and build it up, without waiting for individuals at great private sacrifices to accomplish the work. Such would be the influence of an institution for the education of teachers ; and such is the growing conviction of the strength of early associations and habits, that it cannot be long before the work will be begun in some form. If it be not undertaken by the public and for public purposes, it will be undertaken by individuals for private purposes.

The people of Massachusetts are able and willing, yea, more than willing, they are anxious to do something more for popular education, for the diffusion of knowledge generally. The only questions with them are how and where can means be applied to the purpose to the greatest advantage. It may safely be submitted, by the friends of the free schools, to a republican people and their republican government, which institutions on comparison most deserve the public bounty ; those whose advantages can be enjoyed but by a few, or those which are open to the whole population ; those which have for their main objects good that is remote, or those, whose happy influences are felt, at once, through the whole community. Which institutions deserve the first consideration, and the most anxious attention of a popular government, those, which will place a few scholars and philologists upon a level with the Germans in a knowledge of Greek accents ; or those which will put our whole people upon the level of enlightened men in their practical knowledge of common things. These objects may all be important to us. But the former will be provided for by individuals ; the latter are the peculiar care of government.

The next question, mentioned above, as arising in the progress of this discussion, was, what would be the leading features of an institution for the education of teachers. If the institution were to be founded by the State, upon a large scale, the following parts would seem to be obviously essential. 1. An appropriate library with a philosphi-

cal apparatus. 2. A Principal and assistant Professors in the different departments. 3. A school for children of different ages, embracing both those desiring a general education, and those designed particularly for teachers. 4. A Board of Commissioners, or an enlightened body of men representing the interests and the wishes of the public.*

1. A library should of course be selected with particular reference to the objects of the institution. It would naturally and necessarily, contain the approved authors on the science of education in its widest sense. It would embrace works of acknowledged merit in the various branches of literature and science intimately connected with education; such as anatomy and physiology, the philosophy of the human mind and heart, and the philosophy of language.

Physical education† forms a very essential part of the subject and should be thoroughly understood. This branch includes the development of all the organs of the body. And works upon the physiology of children should be added to the library. Books on gymnastics, containing directions for particular exercises adapted to the development of the several organs, belong to the library of the accomplished instructor as well as to that of the surgeon. Indeed, if the former properly use them, they will enable him to give a firmness to the parts of the body, which may, perhaps, supersede the necessity of the interference of the latter to set them right in manhood.

The philosophy of the infant mind must be understood by the instructor, before much progress can be made in the science of education; for a principal branch of the science consists in forming the mind. And the skill of the teacher in this department is chiefly to be seen in his judicious adaptation of means to the development of the

* In changing this institution, proposed two years ago, from a public to a private establishment, the above plan will require some slight modifications. As soon as a suitable place can be selected and the necessary arrangements be made for opening the seminary, a prospectus will be published stating its means and purposes more in detail.

† This topic had not when these essays were originally written excited so much attention as has since been paid to the subject, or it would, probably have been spoken of, here, more technically and at length.

intellectual faculties. Every book, therefore, which would aid in an analysis of the youthful mind should be placed in the library of the proposed institution.

The human heart, the philosophy of its passions and its affections must be studied by those who expect to influence those passions and form those affections. This branch of the subject includes the government of children, especially in the earliest stages of their discipline. The success of the teacher here depends upon the good judgment with which he arranges and presents to his pupils the motives that will soonest move them, and most permanently influence their actions. The mistaken or wicked principles of parents and instructors, in this department of education, have, no doubt, perverted the dispositions of many hopeful children. If successful experience has been recorded, it should be brought to the assistance of those, who must otherwise act without experience.

Lastly, the study of the philosophy of language would be essential to the scientific teacher. The term, language, is not here understood to mean a class of words called Greek, or another class of words called Latin, or even that class of words which we call English. It means something more general, and something which can hardly be defined. It embraces all the means we use to excite in the minds of others the ideas, which we have already in our own minds. These, whatever they are, are included in the general definition of language. This is a great desideratum in our systems of education. We do not possess a language by which we can produce *precisely* the idea in a pupil, which we have in our own mind and which we wish to excite in his. And impatient and precipitate teachers quite often quarrel with their pupils, because they do not arrive at the same conclusions with themselves, when if they could but look into their minds, they would find, that the ideas with which they begin to reason, or which enter into their processes of reasoning, are altogether different. Every book or fact, therefore, which would do any thing to supply this desideratum, or enable the teacher better to understand precisely the idea which he excites in the mind of his pupils, should be collected in the instructor's library.

2. The institution should have its Principal and its assistant Professors. The government and instruction of a seminary for the education of teachers would be among the most

responsible situations, which could be assigned to men in literary or scientific pursuits. As many of the objects of the institution would be new, so the duties of its instructors would also be new. No commanding minds have gone before precisely in the proposed course and struck out a path, which others may easily follow. There are no *rules* laid down for the direction of those, who will not think upon, or who cannot understand the subject. Men must, therefore, be brought to the task who have the ability to observe accurately and to discriminate nicely. They must also collect the results of what experience they can from books and from others, in order to enable themselves to form some general principles for the direction of their pupils, who will go abroad to carry their improvements to others. It is not supposed for a moment that all, who may receive instruction at the proposed institution with the intention of becoming teachers, will necessarily be made thereby adepts in the science; any more than it is believed that all, who happen to reside four years within the walls of a college are necessarily made expert in the mysteries of syllogisms and the calculus. But having seen correct general principles of education successfully reduced to practice, they may, at least, become *artists* in the profession, and be able to teach pretty well upon a system, the philosophy of which they cannot thoroughly comprehend.

3. A school of children and youth of different ages and pursuing different branches of study would form an essential part of the institution. In the early stages of the education of children, the discipline should consist almost wholly of such exercises as serve to develop the different faculties and strengthen all the powers of the mind. And in the subsequent education of youth, when the discipline comes to consist partly in the development of the mind, and partly in the communication of knowledge, the course of instruction would be the same, whether the pupil were destined to be a teacher or not. The objects of the institution do not, therefore, become peculiar, till after the pupil has acquired a certain degree of freedom and strength of mind; nor till after he has made the acquisition of the requisite amount of knowledge for the profession of teacher. Though a pupil would necessarily imbibe a good deal of clearness and method in his intellectual exercises,

by submitting the direction of them to a skilful instructor; the study of the science of teaching can not properly begin, till he changes relations with those about him; and, instead of following a course prescribed by another, and exhibiting the powers of his own mind without an effort to take cognizance of them, he assumes to look down upon humbler minds, to direct their movements, and to detect and classify the phenomena of their subtle workings.

After the young candidate for an instructor, therefore, has acquired sufficient knowledge for directing those exercises and teaching those branches, which he wishes to profess, he must then begin his labours under the scrutinizing eyes of one who will note his mistakes of government and faults of instruction and correct them. The experienced and skilful professor of the science will observe how the mind of the young teacher acts upon that of the learner. He will see how far and how perfectly they understand each other, and which is at fault if they do not understand each other at all. If the more inexperienced teacher should attempt to force upon the mind of a child an idea or a process of reasoning, for which it was not in a proper state, he would be checked, at once, and told of his fault; and thus, perhaps, the pupil would be spared a disgust for a particular study or an aversion to all study. As our earliest experience would in this manner be under the direction of those wiser than ourselves, it would the more easily be classed under general principles for our direction afterwards. This part of the necessary course in an institution for the education of teachers might be much aided by lectures. Children exhibit such and such intellectual phenomena; the scientific professor of education can explain those phenomena and tell from what they arise. If they are favourable, he can direct how they are to be encouraged and turned to account in the development and formation of the mind. If they are unfavourable, he can explain by what means they are to be overcome or corrected. Seeing intellectual results he can trace them, even through complicated circumstances, to their causes; or, knowing the causes and circumstances, he can predict the result that will follow them. Thus every day's experience would be carefully examined, and made to limit or extend the comprehension of the general principles of the science. Is there any other process or method

than this to arrive at a philosophical system of education? If any occurs to other minds, it is to be hoped that the public may soon have the benefit of it.

4. The fourth branch, which I mentioned above as constituting an important part of an institution for the education of teachers, was, a board of commissioners.* Although they would, probably, have but little to do with the immediate government and instruction of the institution, they would be valuable to it by representing the wishes of the community, and by bringing it more perfectly in contact with the public interests. Besides, it must occur to every one, that in the general management of such an establishment, many of the transactions would require characters and talents very different from those that would, generally, be found in the principal or professors. Men might easily, be found who would lecture to admiration, and yet be wholly incompetent to assume the general direction of the establishment. The professors, too, would always want assistance and authority in determining what acquisitions, should be required for admission into the institution, and what proficiency should be deemed essential in the candidates before leaving it to assume the business of teaching. Upon what principles shall the school be collected? How shall the privilege of attending as new learners in the science of education be settled upon applications from different parts of the State or country? These and many similar questions would render a body of men distinct from the professors important to the institution. Many decisions, too, must necessarily be made affecting individual and private interests. This would be an invidious duty, and the instructors should be relieved from it, as far as possible. It is confidently believed, that the peculiar advantages to be enjoyed at such an institution by children and youth generally as well as by those designed for teachers, would command a price sufficient to defray nearly the whole expenses of the establishment. If not so, then might not each town send one or more young men to the institution to be properly educated for instructors, and require them in return to teach their public

* In changing the plan of the institution from that of a public to a private seminary this part of it must of course be dropped; and its communion with and adaptation to the public interests be sustained by other means.

schools to liquidate the expense? All these means, however, are subjects for future consideration, and are to be devised, after the utility of the institution has been demonstrated.

The peculiar advantages of an institution for the education of teachers would be far too numerous and too important to be either embraced or enforced in the space, which remains for this topic. A few, therefore, of the most obvious ones are all, that can here be allured to. One advantage and a very certain one, would be to raise the character of teachers generally; and consequently, in the same degree, the character of the schools, which they teach. Let us pause for a moment, to consider to what an extent we are interested in every thing, which affects our system of public instruction; and hence derive a motive, before we pass on, to enforce attention to every suggestion for improvement in it.

There were in the district of Massachusetts, according to the census of 1820, five hundred and twenty-three thousand one hundred and fifty-nine souls. Of this number, two hundred and forty-one thousand seven hundred and eleven were under the age of eighteen years. The numbers have since been much augmented. If the population has increased only as fast since the last census, as it did between the census of 1810 and that of 1820, there are now, in round numbers, about two hundred and fifty thousand children and youth in Massachusetts, under the age of eighteen years. This it will be perceived, amounts to almost one half of the whole number of souls. If we take from the older, those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, and add them to the younger part of the population, we shall find at least half, and probably more than half of the whole, under twenty-one years.

These are all flexible subjects of education, in its most comprehensive sense; though they are not all within the influence of that part of it, which can be easily controlled by legislation, or indeed by any means except by an enlightened public opinion. A few of this great number have left the schools and all direct means of education, and entered upon the active business of life. And a portion of the younger part of them are yet subjects only for domestic education. But after these deductions from the two extremes, it will not be extravagant to state, that one

third of the whole population are of a suitable age, have opportunity, and do actually attend school some portion of the year. In Massachusetts, we have not the means of knowing, accurately, the numbers of children and youth, who attend our schools; because we have no system of returns to any public authority, by which such facts can be ascertained.* But I am confirmed in the belief, that the above is not an extravagant estimate, by two circumstances. One of them is, several towns have been carefully examined, and this is about the proportion of the population found in their schools. And the other is, official documents and acknowledged authorities from the neighbouring state of Connecticut, inform us, that one third of the population attend their free schools a part of the year. And probably the same would be found to be true of New York as well as of the remainder of the New England states.

These are statistical facts. Others may reason upon them and draw what conclusions they can, about emigration, the future prospects of New England, her comparative influence in the Union, and the facilities she affords for a *manufacturing district*. They have been introduced, here, because they suggest motives stronger than any others, to enforce attention to our means of popular education. One third of our whole population are now at that period of life, when their principles and characters are rapidly forming. Habits, both moral and intellectual, are taking their direction and acquiring the strength of age. In all this, the schools must have a deep influence. Both the degree and the kind of influence are, to a certain extent, within our control and consequently depend upon our efforts. In twenty years, and surely twenty years are not

* An act passed the legislature, last March, requiring returns to be made to the Secretary of State, from the School Committees of the several towns touching the number of free and private schools, the amount of money expended upon them, the number and ages of the pupils attending them, and some other particulars. In partial obedience to this law, returns, many of them loose and imperfect, have been made from 127 towns only; an abstract of which has been as carefully and intelligibly prepared by the Secretary of State, as the nature of the materials would admit, and published by order of the General Court. When these returns are made accurate and complete from every town in the Commonwealth, they will enable the public to acquire a more thorough knowledge of the subject and consequently to act upon it with greater energy and precision.

beyond the ken of a tolerably clear-sighted politician, this part of our population will succeed to most of the responsible places and relations of their fathers. They must receive all that we have to leave for them. They must take our names and attach to them honour or infamy. They must possess our fortunes to preserve or disperse them. And they must inherit our free institutions to improve, pervert, or destroy them. Here then, are the strongest political motives as well as paternal affection urging upon us attention to all the means of forming, correctly, the characters of those, who are to receive from us our choicest blessings. And what means within our control can be devised more efficient for this purpose, than those primary seminaries for instruction, where the mass of the people must receive several years of their education. Find, if they are to be found, or create, if they are not now to be found, a class of teachers *well skilled* in their profession, and put them into all our free schools. What an effect would soon be produced in their condition! And what a renovating influence these same schools would soon have upon the character of the whole people, who have access to them.

But these are general advantages of a good class of teachers. I promised to speak of the peculiar advantages of the proposed institution to produce them. The library collected with particular reference to the objects of the institution, would contain the *facts* of the science of education scattered along in the history of the world. Facts are the materials of philosophy. And we cannot philosophize, safely, till we have an extensive stock before us. The library would naturally collect, not only those phenomena relating to the subject, which have already been observed; but also the records of those, which must be daily passing before our eyes. Books connected with and collateral to the science will be as important to the purposes of the institution as those professedly written upon the subject. And frequently they will be found to be much more so. Because the former contain the facts and the phenomena, while the latter have only an author's reasoning and conclusions upon them. And the authors, who have written upon education, with very few exceptions, have reasoned speciously, but from very limited and imperfect inductions. So that their conclusions, though they may be correct, as far as they had the necessary means of

making them so, are liable to fail, totally, when reduced to practice under circumstances a little different from those from which the principles have been formed. We want more experience before we begin to reason at large and to draw sweeping conclusions on the subject. And our library would be chiefly valuable, as containing that experience or the results of it accurately and authentically recorded.

But the conclusions of writers on the subject, though received and repeated by every body, are not binding and beyond question, till we know, that the facts from which they reasoned, are *all* which can affect the principles that they deduce from them. And to believe, that the experience of two thousand years, embracing the present age, which is so full of phenomena of all kinds, has not added something to our means of a copious and safe induction to principles of education, requires a stretch of credulity, with which my mind is not gifted. It will be safer as a general rule to assume, that they teach us what to avoid, rather than what to imitate.

When we have collected the means of reasoning correctly, which books can afford, and added to them the living materials of philosophy, which will be constantly exhibited in the school, which is to form a part of the institution, we are to place all these before instructors of discriminating minds, who are able and willing to *observe* as well as to reason. We are then to turn the public attention towards them in good earnest, and let them see that something is expected from them. There is a moral certainty, under such circumstances, that the expectation will be gratified. When the public attention is turned towards any subject, all the ardent and discriminating minds act in concert. And like the rays of the sun converged to a point by a lens, they act with an intensity, which must produce an effect.

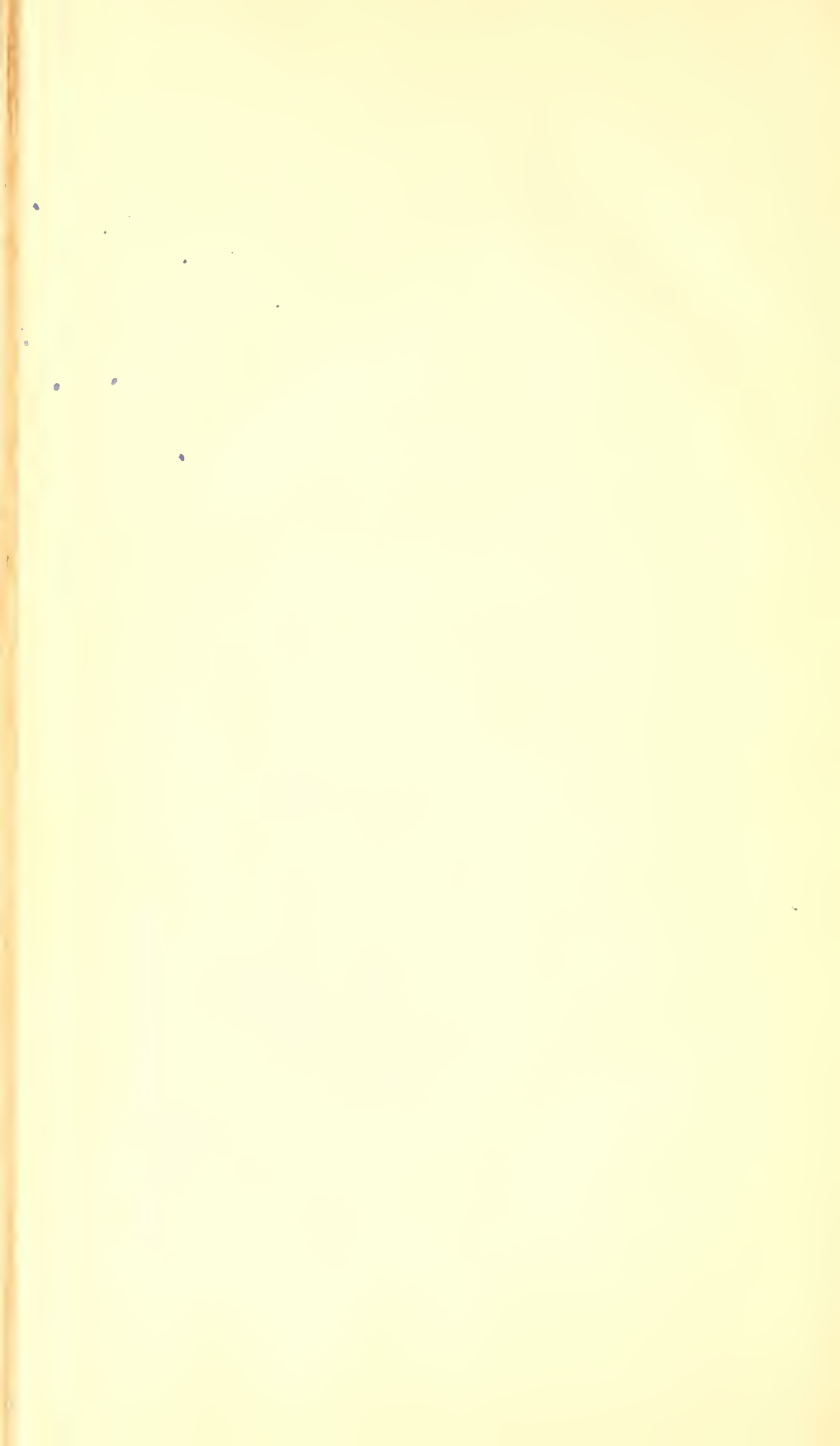
It would be a natural result of the proposed institution, to organize the teachers into a more distinct profession, and to raise the general standard of their intellectual attainments. It would therefore concentrate and give energy and direction to exertions and inquiries, which are now comparatively wasted for want of such direction. No one, indeed, can now foresee, precisely, what effect would be produced upon our systems of education and principles of instruction, by subjecting them to such an ordeal. To foretel the improvements that would be made, would be to make them, and supersede the necessity of an institution for the

purpose. Though the necessity would still remain for some similar means to propagate them among the people. But if our principles of education, and particularly our principles of government and instruction, are not already perfect, we may, confidently, expect improvements; though we may not know, precisely, in what they will consist.

* Many persons knew twenty years ago, that steam was expansive. But who foresaw the degree, to which its expansion could be raised, or the purposes to which it could be applied? Public attention was turned to the subject in earnest, and we now see vessels moving in every direction by its power. It was known long since, that light wood would float, and water run down hill. But who foresaw, twenty years ago, the present state of our internal improvement by means of canals? Public attention and powerful minds were directed to the subject, and we now see boats ascending and descending our mountains and traversing our continent in every direction. Those, who were before almost our antipodes, have now, by the facilities of communication, become our neighbours. The most intrepid prophet would hardly have dared, even ten years ago, to predict the present state of our manufactories. This has all been done, because it could be done, and many minds were turned to the subject and resolved, that it should be done. All these are in many respects analogous cases, and go to show that we do not always know how near to us important improvements are; and that it is only necessary to direct the public attention to a subject in order to ensure some inventions in it.

A great variety of other peculiar advantages to the public, it occurs to me, must arise from an institution for the education of teachers. But I have confined myself to those only, which seemed to be the most striking and important. All others will be found to be involved, in a great degree or wholly, in those which I have stated. And although to enumerate them might add some new motives for attention to the subject; they could not strengthen much the argument in favour of an institution somewhat like that, which has been above described. I must now take my leave of the subject for the present; my only regrets being, that I have not had ability to do more justice to the several topics which I have discussed, nor time to do more justice to my own views of them.





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